



DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION

Information Circular 2009/3, June/October 2009

NEXT DCA MEETING

Open Council Meeting, 31st. October. 10am at Monyash Village Hall

The hall will be open from about 9.30am with tea, coffee & biscuits available. The Old Smithy Café next to the Pub does an excellent breakfast from about 9am. (All meetings start at 10am. at Monyash Village Hall.)

Following Meeting is: AGM 2010: 13th. February 2010

CONSERVATION & ACCESS

If you have any queries or problems about Conservation or Access in the region, please contact the Conservation Officer: Dave Webb, 0115-840-1109, or Asst. Conservation Officer: Christine Wilson, 01433-621149, 07713-416455, both on conservation-off@theDCA.org.uk. Alternatively, contact the Access Officer: Iain Barker, 0114-264-7561, 07710-689704, access@theDCA.org.uk.

DAVID WEBB

David is temporarily out of action following an operation on his knee. We wish him a speedy recovery.

JH RE-OPENED

JH has now been re-opened thanks to sterling work by DCA Projects Officer, Martyn Grayson, and his helpers. This has taken a huge effort and some considerable expense on material, for which DCA will be footing the bill. The pitch head platform at the top of Bitch Pitch has been reconstructed completely and the rubble below stabilised, so that there is no longer a risk of rock falls taking out hanging ropes. The problems in the passage leading to the pitch head have been overcome by collapsing the unstable floor completely so that you no longer walk on it - in its place Martyn has created a traverse by bolting angle iron plates onto the passage walls. The expanding bolt, placed earlier this year to allow the last part of the route to the pitch head to be protected, is in a good position and will be replaced as soon as practicable by an Eco-anchor.

Thanks to all the volunteers concerned in the work.

THE P8 ROCK

The rock which wedged itself across the passage in the Flats area of P8 has now been properly inspected and was found to be solidly wedged and should remain stable. The 3 cavers who checked it were unable to move it more than an inch or so. In the end the best option was to clear any other loose rocks from the area and place a small number of large rocks in a way that would further pin the main one in.

GIANTS HOLE

Someone has recently made a determined, but unsuccessful, attack on the "money box" where you place your fees. A reminder that, if you want to be doubly sure that the thieves can't pinch your payment, even if they do break in, you can pay by cheque, (payable to Peakshill Farm). The trespass fee is £3.00 per head.

DEVONSHIRE MINE

The top block on the "wall" (stile) that one climbs over to access the entrance was reported as loose and precarious. Since then some restoration work has now been done to render it safer (and keep the locals happy). Also reported that the large metal pipe that has been close to Hell's Well for donkeys years has "gone" and the large metal drum that WAS at the top of the pitch opposite Hell's Well is now where the metal pipe used to be.

POLLUTION INCIDENT MANDALE MINE 28-9-09

Report from Phil Bowler, Senior Reserve Manager, Derbyshire Dales NNR: "A group of local cavers visited Mandale mine on that weekend and reported that a quantity of sewage and animal carcasses has been dumped into the far end of the mine. John Barnett reported the incident to me and I have reported it to the Environment Agency. EA are going to investigate and we will monitor for pollution entering the river by taking water samples from the sough tail.

"We are concerned that along with the risk to wildlife that there is also a safety risk to anyone planning on entering the mine. Through your various contacts with the Derbyshire Caving Association can you ensure that the caving community know about the incident and refrain from visiting / take adequate precautions."

WATER ICICLE CLOSE MINE

Repairs are being carried out to the wooden stile next to the gate leading into the field. Please use the stile rather than climbing over the gate. Stabilisation work is due to be carried out on one block in the ginging near the top of the shaft, which seemed not as solid as it should be. Our thanks to the groups involved in the work.

BAD AIR / CARBON DIOXIDE (CO₂) IN PEAK DISTRICT CAVES AND MINES

For some years now DCA has been receiving regular reports of "bad air", i.e. raised CO₂ levels, in mines and caves in the Peak District - the commonest sites reported are the lower passages in Knotlow and Hillocks, Water Icicle, parts of Giants and the Flats in Nettle Pot, though there are occasionally other areas as well. The situation is known to vary with weather conditions, barometric pressure, flooding events, etc. and a survey is now being carried out using CO₂ meters at all these sites and the results are being correlated to see if there are any common factors. (It should be noted that similar situations occur at certain sites on the Mendips and elsewhere; most often, though not always, in dead-end passages lower in the systems.)

Slightly raised CO₂ levels should not normally cause any great harm and the usual effect is to make you puff and pant because CO₂ stimulates the breathing reflex. You also exhale CO₂ when you breathe, so a small and crowded passage may have raised levels. Only if you stay for a long time in an atmosphere of above about 4% CO₂ would there be serious cause for concern and you usually recover quickly once you are in the open air. Cave diggers often find raised levels of CO₂ when they are digging in a choked passage and may decide to arrange for suction devices to draw away the gas from the workface. CO₂ is heavier than air so a possible source of danger is to abseil into an unknown shaft which is choked at the bottom - it is possible to abseil into a "pocket" of CO₂ and pass out rapidly - so such shafts should be treated with caution and suitable safety precautions used. A good and quite sensitive test for raised CO₂ is whether a lighter or match will light - if it won't there is probably a higher than normal level.

It may not be helpful to broadcast publicly on such sites as UKcaving.com that there is danger from raised levels of CO₂ at a particular site without first checking with DCA - some landowners follow websites and may close access to all cavers if they see such a report. Safety matters (such as raised CO₂) and access concerns should first be reported to DCA officers before splashing out on publicly accessible internet forums. In many cases a quick investigation and/or quiet diplomacy with owners can avoid a threat of closure or concerns about legal status if they allow access to continue. Where there is a real need for urgent warnings, DCA can do this with authority via many routes and we can also call in the "big guns" if investigation is required.

LONG RAKE MINE, BRADWELL, DANGER - CARBON MONOXIDE

This potentially lethal gas was encountered in the mine in May 2009, although the source of this pollution has not yet been identified. Carbon Monoxide (CO), unlike carbon dioxide, kills quickly and without warning! DCA therefore recommends that there should be no access to this mine, or to the nearby Bird Mine and New Venture Mine, for the foreseeable future while there remains a possibility of poisonous Carbon Monoxide finding its way into the workings. For further information, contact DCA's Access Officer.

BAT WORKSHOPS 2009

During the winter of 2008/9 Jim Alder and Jessica Eades of the Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group organised several underground Bat Training sessions in adits of the Via Gellia. These sessions proved to be very popular with cavers from various local caving clubs as they were able, perhaps for the first time, to see hibernating bats at close quarters. Consequently demand exceeded the number of available places, but happily they have now agreed to the repeat the sessions this coming winter: to book a place please contact Jim at Jim.Alder@care4free.net A selection of photos from last year's visits can be seen on <http://www.flickr.com/photos/34137875@N04/>

STARLESS RIVER MOBILE CAVING SHOP

Tony Seddon's Starless River mobile caving shop is now making regular appearances in the Peak District, parking at the Orpheus Caving Club Cottage. The next visit will be on 14/15 November.

CAVES AND KARST OF THE PEAK DISTRICT

Enclosed with this circulation, free of charge for all DCA members, is a copy of **BCRA Cave Studies Series, No. 3, "Caves & Karst of the Peak District"** by Trevor Ford and John Gunn. This excellent little booklet was published in 1990 and is still very relevant, although it pre-dates the discoveries in Lathkill Dale (Lathkill Head Upper Entrance and Garden Path) and the more recent major discoveries in Titan/Peak Cavern. The booklet has now gone out of print but DCA has acquired the remaining copies - so if you like this one, you should consider buying, when it appears, the new and updated version which is in preparation.

FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER / NOTICEBOARD

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14 October 2009

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